

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 LILONG 01063 01 OF 02 101242Z POSS DUPE  
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11  
HA-05 ACDA-12 IO-13 EB-08 AGRE-00 COME-00 TRSE-00  
EUR-12 OMB-01 EA-10 /125 W  
-----072222 101439Z /47

R 101056Z JUL 78  
FM AMEMBASSY LILONGWE  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2064  
INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM  
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA  
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO  
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI  
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 LILONGWE 1063

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, SOPN, MI  
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT BANDA'S JUNE 30 PRESS CONFERENCE

1. SUMMARY: IN A RARE PRESS CONFERENCE ON JUNE 30, MALAWI LIFE PRESIDENT DR. H. KAMUZU BANDA ANSWERED QUESTIONS FROM FOREIGN JOURNALISTS FOR OVER TWO HOURS. MOST OF THE QUESTIONS RELATED TO DOMESTIC ISSUES; BANDA REFUSED COMMENT ON RHODESIA AND FOREIGN MILITARY INTERVENTION IN AFRICA. BANDA ASSERTED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT HAD RELEASED ALL OF ITS POLITICAL PRISONERS ON JULY 4, 1977. BANDA ALSO ANSWERED QUERIES ABOUT HIS PERSONAL TOBACCO HOLDINGS, THE BANNING OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES, POSSIBLE FORMATION OF OPPOSITION PARTIES, AND THE FUTURE OF THE ASIAN (INDIAN) COMMUNITY IN MALAWI.

END SUMMARY.

2. ON JUNE 30 LIFE PRESIDENT BANDA HELD HIS FIRST NEWS  
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 LILONG 01063 01 OF 02 101242Z POSS DUPE

CONFERENCE FOR FOREIGN JOURNALISTS IN MALAWI IN SEVERAL YEARS. MOST OF THE QUESTIONS WERE RELATED TO BANDA'S POLICIES WHICH HAVE BEEN CRITICIZED IN FOREIGN MEDIA. HE OPENED BY STATING THAT HE HAD NOT MET WITH FOREIGN NEWSMEN DURING THE LAST 6-10 YEARS BECAUSE MANY JOURNALISTS "DID NOT WANT TO KNOW THE FACTS." THROUGHOUT, BANDA MAINTAINED HIS COMPOSURE EXCEPT DURING HIS RESPONSE TO A QUESTION

ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF FOREIGN OBSERVERS INSPECTING MALAWIAN PRISONS. THE NINE JOURNALISTS, REPRESENTING TIME MAGAZINE, BBC RADIO AND TV, LONDON TIMES, FINANCIAL TIMES, REUTERS AND UPI, WERE ALL BRITISH EXCEPT FOR ONE AMERICAN. THEY HAD BEEN GIVEN PERMISSION TO ENTER MALAWI TO COVER THE JUNE 29 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS AND NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATIONS JULY 1-6. BANDA ASSERTED THAT HE HAD AGREED TO MEET WITH THE NEWSMEN BECAUSE THEY HAD BEEN ASKING QUESTIONS THAT ONLY HE COULD ANSWER.

3. POLITICAL DETAINEES. BANDA CLAIMED THAT ALL POLITICAL DETAINEES HAD BEEN RELEASED JUNE 4, 1977, AND NONE WERE CURRENTLY BEING HELD. HE SAID THAT THOSE CURRENTLY IMPRISONED UNDER DETENTION ORDERS WERE EITHER CRIMINALS AWAITING TRIAL OR OTHERS WHOM THE POLICE ARE INVESTIGATING (PRESUMABLY FOR CRIMINAL OFFENSES). HE THEN DISCLOSED THAT HE HAD DETAINED A PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATE, FRASER PHIRI, FOR "TERRORIZING" AND "MOLESTING" HIS PEOPLE DURING THE RECENT ELECTIONS (SEE SEPTTEL RE ELECTIONS). (COMMENT: IT IS UNCLEAR WHICH, IF ANY, CRIMINAL STATUTES COULD BE USED TO PROSECUTE THE DETAINED POLITICIAN. AS FOR THE NUMBERS OF CURRENT POLITICAL DETAINEES, WE HAVE BEEN INFORMED BY A RELIABLE SOURCE WITH EXCELLENT CONTACTS THAT ABOUT 30 MALAWIANS ARE STILL IN DETENTION ON POLITICAL GROUNDS, NOTWITHSTANDING BANDA'S DISCLAIMER, INCLUDING THE EX-HEAD OF THE SECRET POLICE, FOCUS GWEDE.)  
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 LILONG 01063 01 OF 02 101242Z POSS DUPE

4. BANDA ATTACKED AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL IN WEST GERMANY FOR STATEMENTS ABOUT POLITICAL PRISONERS IN MALAWI. HE REPEATED THAT NO POLITICAL PRISONERS WERE HELD AND ACCUSED AI OF MAKING THE CHARGES WITHOUT VISITING MALAWI. (COMMENT: IT IS VERY UNLIKELY THAT REPRESENTATIVES FROM AI WOULD BE PERMITTED ENTRY.) WHEN THE AMERICAN JOURNALIST ASKED IF AI OR THE FOREIGN PRESS PRESENT COULD VISIT MALAWIAN PRISONS, BANDA HESITATES AND THEN SAID NO. BANDA MAINTAINED THAT IT WAS A QUESTION OF SOVEREIGNTY. WHEN TOLD THE QUESTIONER WAS AMERICAN, BANDA ASSERTED THAT PRESIDENT CARTER WOULD NOT ALLOW FOREIGN OBSERVERS TO INVESTIGATE U.S. PRISONS. BANDA BECAME AGITATED WHEN THE AMERICAN JOURNALIST REPLIED THAT HE THOUGHT SUCH VISITS HAD OCCURRED. BANDA ANGRILY STATED THAT HE KNEW A LOT ABOUT THE U.S. AND HE WAS NOT "DECEIVED". CONTINUING, HE SAID THAT WHILE HE RESPECTED THE U.S., THE AMERICANS "CANNOT TEACH THE WHOLE WORLD" AND THERE ARE "SOME THINGS WRONG THERE."

5. FOREIGN POLICY. WHEN QUERIED ABOUT RHODESIA AND FOREIGN MILITARY INTERVENTION IN AFRICA, BANDA REPLIED THAT

HE WOULD NOT DISCLOSE HIS VIEWS ON THESE ISSUES TO NEWSMEN.  
HE SAID THAT, WHILE HE WAS VERY INTERESTED IN THE AFFAIRS  
OF SOUTHERN AFRICA, HE SPENDS 99 PERCENT OF HIS TIME IN  
ATTEMPTING TO IMPROVE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS  
WITHIN MALAWI. THIS LEFT LITTLE TO SPEND ON EXTERNAL  
AFFAIRS. AFTER EXPLAINING HIS POLICY OF CONTACT AND  
DIALOGUE WITH THE WHITE REGIMES IN THE REGION, BANDA  
STATED THAT BLACK LEADERS  
MUST MEET WITH THE WHITE LEADERS  
OF SOUTHERN AFRICA.

6. BANDA'S TOBACCO HOLDINGS. IN AN OPENING STATEMENT,  
HE ASKED ONE OF THE JOURNALISTS TO READ PART OF AN  
ARTICLE FROM A BRITISH NEWSPAPER CONCERNING HIS PERSONAL  
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 LILONG 01063 01 OF 02 101242Z POSS DUPE

TOBACCO HOLDINGS. THE EXCERPT CLAIMED THAT MOST TOBACCO  
PRODUCTION IN MALAWI WAS CONTROLLED BY BANDA, EITHER  
PERSONALLY OR THROUGH HIS COMPANIES (I.E. PRESS HOLDINGS)  
AND MEMBERS OF HIS FAMILY. BANDA ASSERTED THAT THE  
ARTICLE CONTAINED "LIBELOUS AND ATROCIOUS LIES." HE  
EXPLAINED THAT HE OWNED TOBACCO ESTATES " BUT NOT FROM  
CHOICE" AS HE HAD ACQUIRED THEM IN THE EARLY 1960'S  
WHEN BRITISH INTERESTS WERE ABANDONING ESTATES IN THE  
CENTRAL REGION BECAUSE OF DECLINING PROFITS. TO MAINTAIN  
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AREA, BANDA SAID HE BOUGHT THE

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 LILONG 01063 02 OF 02 101340Z POSS DUPE  
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11  
HA-05 ACDA-12 IO-13 EB-08 AGRE-00 COME-00 TRSE-00  
EUR-12 OMB-01 EA-10 /125 W  
-----072594 101437Z /47

R 101056Z JUL 78  
FM AMEMBASSY LILONGWE  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2065  
INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA  
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO  
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI  
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 LILONGWE 1063

FARMS AND HAS USED THEM TO TEACH AFRICANS HOW TO GROW TOBACCO. JOHN NGWIRI, HEAD OF THE MALAWIAN CIVIL SERVICE, DISCLOSED AT BANDA'S REQUEST THAT THE LIFE PRESIDENT'S ESTATES PRODUCED 3.4 MILLION LBS. OF TOBACCO IN 1977. THIS, CLAIMED BANDA, WAS A VERY SMALL PART OF MALAWI'S TOTAL CROP OF 113 MILLION LBS. (COMMENT: WHILE THERE IS NO REASON TO DOUBT THE OUTPUT FIGURE GIVEN FOR HIS PERSONAL HOLDINGS, BANDA DID NOT MENTION THAT HE HOLDS 99 PERCENT OF THE SHARES OF PRESS FARMING AND 50 PERCENT OF GENERAL FARMING. BANDA IS SAID TO HOLD THESE IN TRUST FOR THE MALAWI PEOPLE. THE TWO CONCERNS ARE THOUGHT TO HAVE PRODUCED ABOUT 30 MILLION LBS. OF TOBACCO LAST YEARR. THERE IS LITTLE INDICATION, HOWEVER, THAT BANDA PERSONALLY DERIVES FINANCIAL BENEFIT FROM THESE OPERATIONS. THE PROFITS APPEAR TO BE EITHER REINVESTED OR USED FOR SUCH ACTIVITIES AS BUILDING THE NEW PARTY HEADQUARTERS AND HOUSES FOR THE WOMEN'S LEAGUE.)

7. JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES. BANDA CONTENDED THAT THIS  
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 LILONG 01063 02 OF 02 101340Z POSS DUPE

RELIGIOUS SECT HAD BROUGHT PROBLEMS UPON ITSELF THROUGH MEMBERS' OVER-ZEALOUS EFFORTS TO CONVERT OTHERS TO THE FAITH. NON-MEMBERS BECAME FED-UP BY THE JWS' "PESTERING", HE SAID, AND BEGAN TO PHYSICALLY ATTACK THEM. THE SECT WAS THEREFORE BANNED. (COMMENT: IT IS CURIOUS THAT BANDA DID NOT DISCLOSE THAT THE GOM HAS REACHED A TACIT ACCOMMODATION WITH THE JWS: THEY ARE PERMITTED TO REMAIN IN THE COUNTRY SO LONG AS THEY DO NOT PROSELYTIZE AND FLAGRANTLY DEMONSTRATE THAT THEY ARE NOT SUBJECT TO MALAWI LAW.)

8. OTHER TOPICS. BANDA REPORTED THAT HE WOULD NOT PREVENT THE FORMATION OF OPPOSITION PARTIES AND WOULD IN FACT "WELCOME" SUCH AN OCCURRENCE. HE ALSO SAID THAT, IN HIS OPINION, THE POSITION OF PRIME MINISTER WOULD NOT BE CREATED IN MALAWI. CONCERNING THE ASIAN COMMUNITY, BANDA STATED THAT ALTHOUGH THE GOM IS "NOT CHASING THEM AWAY", HE DID NOT HONESTLY BELIEVE THE ASIANS COULD PLAY ANY PERMANENT ROLE IN MALAWI. ASKED ABOUT POSSIBLE RETIREMENT PLANS, HE HAD MALAWI CONGRESS PARTY (MCP) SECRETARY GENERAL MULUZI ANSWER THAT BANDA WAS LIFE PRESIDENT BY THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE AND THE MALAWIAN PEOPLE

WOULD BE UNHAPPY IF BANDA CHOSE TO STEP ASIDE. DIRECTED TO ANSWER A QUESTION ON HOW A SUCCESSOR WILL EVENTUALLY BE SELECTED, MULUZI EXPLAINED THAT A MCP CONVENTION WOULD BE HELD TO CHOOSE BANDA'S REPLACEMENT.

9. COMMENT: WHILE THE PRESS CONFERENCE (BROADCAST BY RADIO) GAVE A RARE OPPORTUNITY FOR MALAWIANS TO HEAR BANDA'S VIEWS ON SIGNIFICANT ISSUES NOT NORMALLY DISCUSSED IN HIS LOCAL SPEECHES, BANDA WAS OBVIOUSLY TRYING TO REACH A MUCH WIDER AUDIENCE. (HE MADE MANY OF THESE OBSERVATIONS IN HIS MAY 6 PRESS CONFERENCE IN CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 LILONG 01063 02 OF 02 101340Z POSS DUPE

BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA). IT IS POSSIBLE THAT, WITH MASS DETENTIONS OVER, BANDA DECIDED THAT HE HAD LITTLE TO LOSE AND MUCH TO GAIN BY FACING JOURNALISTS: AN ATTEMPT TO OBTAIN RECOGNITION FOR MALAWI'S POSITIVE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ACHIEVEMENTS. TWO OF THESE JOURNALISTS INFORMED US THAT THEIR VIEWS OF MALAWI HAD BEEN TURNED AROUND TO A POSITIVE ATTITUDE AS A RESULT OF THEIR VISIT. THE FACT THAT MALAWI HAS BEEN VIRTUALLY IGNORED IN THE WORLD PRESS, DESPITE THE GROWING INTEREST IN THIS PART OF AFRICA, MAY BE A PARTIAL EXPLANATION FOR THIS EFFORT.  
SHEINBAUM

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 jan 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** PRESIDENT, PRESS CONFERENCES  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 10 jul 1978  
**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1978LILONG01063  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Expiration:**  
**Film Number:** D780282-0087  
**Format:** TEL  
**From:** LILONGWE  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1978/newtext/t19780780/aaaacpdg.tel  
**Line Count:** 253  
**Litigation Code IDs:**  
**Litigation Codes:**  
**Litigation History:**  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Message ID:** f982e378-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Office:** ACTION AF  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 5  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Retention:** 0  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 23 apr 2005  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**SAS ID:** 2071038  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** PRESIDENT BANDA'S JUNE 30 PRESS CONFERENCE  
**TAGS:** PINT, SOPN, MI, (BANDA, H KAMUZU)  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**vdkgvwkey:** odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS\_Docs/f982e378-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
20 Mar 2014  
**Markings:** Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014